CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

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Iran formerly called Persia is a country of an area of 1,648,195 km² and a population of 35 million which is not uniformly distributed and is composed of many ethnic groups.

The majority of Iranians are Moslem, constituting over 90% of the population and are of heterogeneous origin.

Many of the tribes of Iran are of local origin. Others, however, migrated to Iran or were brought from bordering countries after the Islamic conquest to act as buffers against local dissident groups. Although these tribes were ethnically distinct to begin with, consequent, intermarriage and federation resulted in some mixture, and their progeny are today lost in the Moslem population.

Iran may be divided into several major geographical zones: the Iranian plateau with an average height of about 1,300 m. above sea level, a narrow coastal plain between the Elburz Mountains and the Caspian Sea, a similar littoral zone along the Persian Gulf and the extensive desert areas of Khurasan. Persian, an Indo-Aryan language, in various dialect forms is spoken by
three quarters of the population. The majority of the remaining peoples speak Turkish dialects. Minority languages such as Arabic, found among some groups in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf, are also evident, and a few esoteric languages are still spoken by some isolated tribes.

Among tribal populations the Kurds, speaking a Persian dialect, are the largest group. Over two million live in Iran, in addition to those living in Iraq, Turkey and U.S.S.R. They are found mainly in the western regions of the Plateau and have maintained a strongly independent culture.

The present day Iran population has a small contribution from Negroes; Negroes were brought as slaves during Moslem Conquest and earlier, and there is some evidence that negritos were once present in the south of Iran, along the Persian Gulf, but no reliable sources for this are available (Frye, 69). Mongols also invaded Iran two times and left both their biological and cultural effects.

The historic evidence suggests therefore that the modern population of Iran is likely to be quite varied in its genetic composition. Its geographical position, especially in relation to India and to Europe, and the important part played by the Aryans in contributing to its highly developed culture makes it people an important
The literature on the biological characteristics of the people of Iran is scanty and, so far, there is no systematic study available on the biological anthropology of these ethnic groups.

Therefore, this survey would bring to light the varied biological composition of the two populations in the Southern Iran.

1.3: Aims of the Present study:

The aims of the present study are:

(a) To fill in this lacunae of the biological anthropology of the people of Iran.

(b) Although the author hopes to continue this type of work in future, presently biological-morphological, genetic, dermatoglyphic, and population structure - namely mating patterns etc. - data have been collected, analyzed and interpreted from the two groups in Southern of Iran.

(c) Based on these data affinities between these two groups will be studied.

(d) It is well known that during the past 4,000 years there were both cultural and trade contacts between Iran and India and that the material remain in several Indian archeological sites show similarities with the Iranian sites (Sankalia, 1974), efforts will be made to compare the biological parameters of the Iranian Caucasians and some select populations of north-west India.
It is hoped that the proposed study will not only add for the first time, systematic morphogenetic, dermaloglyphic and population structure data on the people of Iran, but will open up new avenues of research in the biological history of man in Iran.